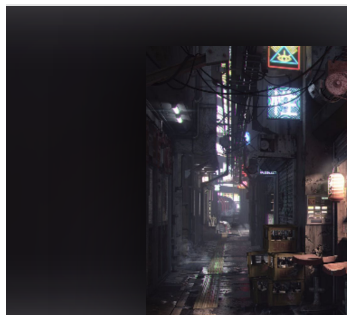




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# Border Of Stardust



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## Chapter 1 by Gn4rledNe0n

Night falls over over Blackburn, and I come out to play.

I fix my trilby to an angle and pace down the back alley, past the neon displays and the black market cyber dealers. The last thing I need is to be caught with an illegal augmentation.

I exit the alley onto 4th street, the roar of the hover car highway above me, and proceed down the road to the NewCom Corporation building. I walk through the sliding doors, security cameras rolling as I walk down the barren lobby, the metal walls and floors making it seem like i'm being swallowed by a great machine. I walk to the empty counter and ring the bell, and within moments a holograph blonde appears.

"hello sir, how may I assist you today?" she inquires.

"Nick Grant to see Erich Byrn please."

"Okay sir, please have a seat and he will be ready for you."

I lean against a nearby support column and light up a smoke. It's fumes drift upward toward the industrial sized ceiling fans. A Lot of money spent on ventilation here.

## Chapter 2 by Story Girl



/Good thing/. he thought as he rinned a loud smellv fart. The smell choked him a little bit. but

then was sucked away by the powerful fans. Luckily the cute secretary was gone to fetch Dr. Byrn. Maybe after there little me

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"Ah, there is the old devil!" Nick said.

"I would prefer if you did not refer to me as the devil Mr. Grant. I am your doctor, not some demonic deviant. What do you want? A problem with your enhancement?" The doctor inquired after his small rant.

"Ah, yeah. You could say so... mind if we talk up in your office?"

### Chapter 3 by Harlander



#### **\*And suddenly, time came to a standstill\***

And suddenly, time came to a standstill.

Well, almost. The tiny sliver of silicon and rare earth metals that cuddled my brainstem like an affectionate puppy had activated, shooting a 300Hz pulse into my grey matter like the world's most aggressive metronome.

My perception sped up a thousandfold. I could plot each lazy curl in the smoke drifting from my cigarette.

"Tthhhhhaaaaa..." the Doctor began. I could see every ripple of the flesh of his face as his mouth opened, every string of saliva from his teeth. It was grotesque.

"aaaaaaat wwwooooo..." he went on. It seemed to last for an eternity. I wanted to move, but the implant, miraculous though it was, was flawed. My mind, my perceptions, were as fast as lightning but my body could only move at the same speed as ever. I couldn't even blink to blot out the ghastly wobbling of Dr. Byrn's jowls.

At long, long last, the implant shut down, and time snapped back to its full speed. "...n't be a problem. Please, follow me," Dr. Byrn finally finished, and he led me up to his office.

### Chapter 4 by Phantim



I shook my head, clearing my thoughts and followed him up. Winking at the receptionist, of course. The elevator was pretty... my death trap at my apartment. The silence was a bit awkward and... until... the Doc had opened that B6, so it might take a minute.

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"So doc... how's uh, the wife?" I ask to break the silence. By the look on his face I immediately new I asked the wrong question. I would feel bad, but getting him upset was one of my few joys in life.

"Well... let me tell you about that bitch..." the doctor began.

After a few minutes we finally reached floor 86 and the doors opened.

"... so naturally I had to have her killed." Doc concluded his story.

"Naturally..." I reply. The guy was a bit crazy, but hell, I was a murdering criminal myself. Maybe that's why he took care of people like me. Hah, probably was one of his patients that took out the old lady.

"So, Mr. Grant... what did you need from me this time?"

## Chapter 5 by Chronicler



"Stardust." I said reflexively.

I didn't mean to say that in the open hallway. hell, I hadn't entirely decided whether or not to ask him for it. Not only was the stuff incredibly illegal, but it was also extremely dangerous. It was definitely shaping up to be one of those days. I shifted nervously, waiting for his response. The Doctor looked at me coolly, blue eyes seeming to penetrate deep into my soul, through the wires and cables and straight to the bit of red, the last bit of humanity left in me. "Dangerous stuff." He whispered quietly. "Yeah, no shit." I said louder than I intended. Damn my mouth! It was most definitely one of those days. Whenever I got an episode like I did in the lobby it always took a little while for my brain to catch back up with the rest of me, and now was definitely NOT the time for my mouth to run away without me.

"Look Doc-" "I have the stuff," The Doctor interrupted, still looking at me, unfazed. "But it's going to cost you." I slumped my shoulders, a sinking feeling slowly filling my gut. "What did you

laid in mind." The Doctor smiled at me as he turned the handle leading to his office. It was one of those eerie smiles, the kind that made my blood run cold down my spine. "Another mission of course, let's talk more inside."

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Chapter 6 by James



God, this one better be worth it. His office looked the same as it always had.

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